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Security Council

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Letter dated 1 May 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith an assessment of the work of the Security Council for the month of February 2017 during the presidency of Ukraine (see annex).

The assessment was prepared under my own responsibility. Although other members of the Security Council were consulted on its contents, the assessment should not be considered as representing the views of the Council.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Volodymyr **Yelchenko**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

17-07209 (E) 310517

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Annex to the letter dated 1 May 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Assessment of the work of the Security Council during the presidency of Ukraine (February 2017)

Introduction

During the month of February 2017, the Security Council held 19 public meetings and 14 consultations of the whole. The Council adopted four resolutions and issued one presidential statement and eight statements to the press, including a statement to the press on the passing away of the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Vitaly Churkin, on 20 February.

The Council held two open debates, one on the theme "Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts: protection of critical infrastructure against terrorist attacks" and one on the theme "Maintenance of international peace and security: conflicts in Europe".

In accordance with the Organization's practice, Ukraine began its presidency with the presentation of the provisional programme of work of the Council for the month, which was adopted at the Council's consultations of the whole on 1 February.

Europe

Letter dated 28 February 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2014/136)

On 2 February, the Council held a public meeting at which it was briefed by the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Jeffrey Feltman, the Chief Monitor of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, Ertuğrul Apakan, and the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Stephen O'Brien, on the deterioration of the security situation in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine (see S/PV.7876).

The Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs warned that the more than 10,000 reported explosions in the Donetsk region over the past 24 hours had left civilians in the crossfire. Heavy weapons banned under the Minsk agreements, including multiple-launch rocket systems, were endangering residential areas, water purification plants and power lines. "The combatants must stop the shelling in cities such as Avdiivka, on both sides of the contact line," he emphasized, calling for an immediate halt to all hostilities, full observance of the ceasefire, immediate and unhindered humanitarian access, and the facilitation of full access for the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission. He pledged that the United Nations remained committed to supporting a peaceful resolution of the conflict in a manner that would uphold the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Ukraine.

The Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission spoke by videoconference from Ukraine. He painted a grim picture of the difficulties that OSCE monitors encountered in gaining access to the affected areas. Welcoming the statement by the Trilateral Contact Group of 1 February, he echoed its sentiment regarding the need to restore electricity and water supplies, as well as access for repair crews to facilitate repairs of critical infrastructure.

The Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs reported that people along the front line had been without water or heat for 24 hours following the shelling, which had damaged electricity and water systems, generating a knock-on effect on the heating supply. Temperatures were frigid, and civilians faced a temperature of -20°C without adequate shelter, heat or access to water. He reported that the United Nations and its humanitarian partners had joined a Government-led assessment team to Avdiivka, a front-line town in a Government-controlled area, where critical water and electricity systems had been recently damaged. The latest escalation of violence was exacerbating the ongoing needs of some 3.8 million civilians who continued to bear the brunt of the conflict, and more than 70 per cent of the people in need were women, children and the elderly.

The Council members expressed concern about the escalating violence and the deteriorating humanitarian situation in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine and emphasized the importance of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. They reiterated that the solution must be a political rather than a military one and called upon the parties to uphold the Minsk agreements and comply fully with Security Council resolution 2202 (2015). The Council members also expressed support for the efforts of OSCE, and several representatives called for safe access to the affected regions for its monitoring teams.

It was noted that Ukrainian forces continued to respect the ceasefire, but that the Russian Federation, on the contrary, had blatantly violated the Minsk agreements from the start, by continuing attacks and occupying Ukrainian towns. Proxies of the Russian Federation occupied 1,700 square kilometres of Ukrainian territory beyond the contact line agreed upon in Minsk in 2014. Military attacks against Government-held Avdiivka began on 29 January from areas under the control of "Russian Federation-led terrorists" with the use of Grad multiple-rocket launch systems and tanks, among other weapons forbidden under the Minsk agreements. The shelling had intensified on 30 and 31 January, damaging civilian infrastructure. Until 1 February, numerous attempts by Ukraine to repair it had been blocked. It was stated that the actions of the Russian Federation could qualify as war crimes. The Russian Federation was urged to abide by the commitments made in Minsk, especially the security and humanitarian provisions. The international community was called upon to urge that country to "get out of Ukraine".

One delegation said that Kyiv had sought to use the clashes that it had itself triggered as a pretext to pull out of the Minsk agreements. Rather than normalizing the situation in Donbas and seeking compromises within the framework of the Trilateral Contact Group and the Normandy format, Ukraine was aiming for a military settlement of the conflict. That delegation went on to note that the escalation in Donbas had coincided with foreign visits of the President of Ukraine.

Maintenance of international peace and security: conflicts in Europe

On 21 February, the Council held an open debate on the theme "Conflicts in Europe" under the item entitled "Maintenance of international peace and security" (see S/PV.7886).

At the beginning of the meeting, members of the Council observed a minute of silence in memory of the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, who passed away on 20 February.

The meeting was chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Pavlo Klimkin. Representatives of 51 Member States, observers and international organizations participated in the debate.

The Secretary-General stressed that the Council was seized of many conflict situations in Europe, noting that the Organization was working with regional mechanisms such as OSCE and the European Union in tackling them. He emphasized the misleading nature of the term "frozen conflict" often used to describe conflicts in Europe, and underlined that the risk of renewed violence remained until peace agreements were signed and implemented. The Secretary-General noted that the inability of regional and international institutions to prevent and resolve conflicts was seriously undermining their credibility, making it more difficult for them to succeed in the future. He underscored that the United Nations had globally tried-and-tested tools, norms, agendas, lessons learned and best practices for mediation, the promotion of dialogue, early warning and early action, preventing and resolving conflicts, and peacebuilding. He urged all those with influence to step up their efforts to resolve existing conflicts in Europe and to prevent tensions from escalating into new conflicts.

The Secretary-General of OSCE, Lamberto Zannier, stressed that the order that had materialized after the end of the cold war had failed to bring about full stability or balance. He said that the crisis in and around Ukraine marked a return of geopolitics to the agenda of OSCE. He cited the organization's swift and flexible response to that crisis as the most visible example of its ability to address crises both at the political level and on the ground. Underscoring the role of OSCE in addressing protracted conflicts in Europe, he said that the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh had seen a worrying deterioration on the ground, while the Transnistrian settlement process required a fresh determination to move forward. He emphasized the value of building strong coalitions among international organizations, civil society and the private sector and underlined the importance of involving women in conflict resolution. He underscored the need to continue to bolster the valuable relationship between the United Nations and OSCE by making full use of the potential of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, including in mediation, conflict prevention and resolution, the fight against transnational threats and the economic and environmental sphere.

The Secretary-General of the European External Action Service of the European Union, Helga Schmid, stressed that increasingly complex conflicts must be addressed through local, regional and international efforts. The focus of the Secretary-General on conflict prevention and mediation went hand in hand with the global strategy of the European Union aimed at addressing conflicts early, and promoting stability in the countries closest to the European Union was a natural strategic priority. Through its European Neighbourhood Policy, the European Union offered cooperation in such areas as security sector reform, countering terrorism, extremism and organized crime, and strengthening cybersecurity. She emphasized that the European security order was firmly based on the principles of the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of States, the inviolability of borders, the peaceful settlement of disputes and the free choice of countries in deciding their own future. In this regard, she stressed that the European Union supported the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Ukraine, and condemned and would not recognize the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol.

All participating Member States stressed that ongoing and protracted conflicts in Europe posed a serious risk of further deterioration of the security situation and threatened regional and global stability, calling into question the security architecture in Europe and exacerbating other security issues related to economic, energy and human dimensions. They recalled that the United Nations was working in a complementary way with regional organizations and mechanisms created to deal with those challenges in line with Chapter VIII of the Charter. It was

underscored that Member States, the Security Council, regional mechanisms and all stakeholders should intensify their efforts to define a peace and security agenda aimed at resolving existing conflicts, preventing tensions from escalating into new conflicts and addressing other complex challenges in Europe. The members of the Security Council recalled the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and reaffirmed full respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of countries affected by conflicts. They acknowledged the need to intensify efforts to achieve political settlement of conflicts in Europe and called for further mobilization of the international community in that direction.

All delegations expressed their grave concern about the continuing deterioration of the situation along the line of contact in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine due to ceasefire violations and the use of weapons prohibited by the Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements. Some delegations expressed particular concern that such actions had led to deaths and injuries, including among civilians, and continued to seriously affect the humanitarian situation in the region and exacerbate the existing environmental and humanitarian crisis. The majority of delegations welcomed the diplomatic efforts of the Normandy format and the Trilateral Contact Group, and called for the full implementation of the measures agreed during the Normandy meetings. They also strongly supported the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in fulfilling its mandate and tasks relating to the effective monitoring and verification of the implementation of relevant provisions of the Minsk agreements and urged all sides to ensure the immediate, full, safe and unhindered access of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine, including along the Ukrainian-Russian Federation border.

Some delegations expressed their full support for the efforts of the OSCE Minsk Group in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and urged the parties to the conflict to de-escalate tensions and fully implement the agreed conflict prevention measures. It was also stressed that, despite positive assessments and many efforts, the Transnistrian conflict had not yet been resolved and further active efforts were needed in the 5+2 process.

Some delegations also recalled that, in the Western Balkans, the devastating conflicts of the 1990s had left a damaging legacy and that reconciliation and peacebuilding efforts were incomplete. They underlined the need to continue efforts to promote the further normalization of relations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, between Belgrade and Pristina as well as between Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

On 22 February, the Council held a public meeting to hear a briefing by the Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs of Austria, Sebastian Kurz, on the priorities of the Austrian chairmanship of OSCE (see S/PV.7887).

Citing conflicts in the Syrian Arab Republic and in and around Ukraine, as well as serious violations of international law, rising nationalism, radicalization and terrorism in societies, he said that armed conflicts had caused much suffering, displacement and destruction in the OSCE area and emphasized the need to find political solutions. He also emphasized that one of the central issues on the OSCE agenda was the crisis in and around Ukraine, noting that the organization held regular discussions on the annexation of the Crimean peninsula, the flow of arms into the Donbas region of Ukraine, the role of the Russian Federation, the

implementation of the Minsk agreements and repeated acts of violence. Other major security challenges were radicalization and terrorism, both of which threatened the internal stability of OSCE participating States, the rule of law and the basic freedoms of expression, religion and belief.

Noting that more than 10,000 people from the OSCE area had joined Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), he said that such fighters not only caused terrible suffering in the Syrian Arab Republic, Iraq and Libya, but also threatened the security of OSCE participating States.

The members of the Council commended the efforts of OSCE to build peace and stability in the region, within the framework of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, and expressed their support for the priorities identified by Austria. Many Council members said that the Minsk agreements remained the agreed basis for a peaceful resolution to the situation in Donbas, and referred to the endorsement of the Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements in resolution 2202 (2015). Some members called on the Russian Federation to withdraw its military forces and exert political pressure on the militants in Ukraine, and to comply with the provisions of the Minsk agreements. It was stated that the international rules-based system was under threat owing to the consequences of the violation by the Russian Federation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. One delegation, for its part, reiterated that it was vital that full compliance with the Minsk Package of Measures be finally achieved in order to grant the Donbas region and its inhabitants the possibility of a peaceful life and democratic self-government and to restore their broken economic ties to the rest of Ukraine.

Another delegation considered that the ongoing aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine remained a major threat to European security. The unilateral recognition by the Russian Federation of so-called documents issued by illegal structures in parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions was condemned. It was also stressed that the political goal of the Russian Federation of undermining Ukraine remained unchanged and that, instead of implementing the Minsk commitments in good faith, the Russian Federation had resorted to political and military provocations, blackmail and political pressure. Several delegations urged that the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission be strengthened.

United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo

On 27 February, the Council held a public meeting, in compliance with Security Council resolution 1244 (1999), to hear a presentation by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Zahir Tanin, on the basis of resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999) (see S/PV.7891).

In his presentation, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General said that recent months had been characterized by inconsistent progress and heightened tensions between Belgrade and Pristina, as had been seen in a series of reactions and counter-reactions, accompanied by threatening rhetoric. He stressed that the meeting of leaders from Belgrade and Pristina at the highest political level, held under the auspices of the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, had been an essential step towards charting a path out of the deteriorating situation. He also noted the renewed calls by Pristina for the transformation of the Kosovo Security Force into the Kosovo armed forces. Discussing the implementation of the future Association/Community of Serb majority municipalities in Kosovo, he said that they would help Kosovo Serbs to

re-engage with the Government activities from which they had removed themselves over the past three months.

The President of Serbia, Tomislav Nikolić, participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council. He said that Serbia was committed to resolving all outstanding issues through dialogue and within a status-neutral framework. He stressed that the possible transformation of the Kosovo Security Force into the Kosovo armed forces would be in violation of Council resolution 1244 (1999) and would threaten efforts to stabilize Kosovo and Metohija, as well as the wider western Balkans region. He noted that almost four years had elapsed since the signing of the First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations, a key segment of which dealt with the Association/Community of Serb majority municipalities. Demanding that Kosovo honour its own commitments in that regard and that the international community offer a powerful voice on the matter, he said that the establishment of the Association/Community was a precondition for the survival of the Serbian people in Kosovo.

Ms. Vlora Çitaku participated in the meeting under rule 39 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council. In her statement, she emphasized that Kosovo was a free, independent and sovereign State, recognized by an overwhelming majority of free nations. She said that Kosovars faced one-sided provocations by Serbia on a daily basis, citing an incident in January in which a train from Serbia had arrived covered in the slogan "Kosovo is Serbia" in 21 different languages. She also stressed that Kosovo institutions had gone to great lengths to accommodate the needs of ethnic Serbs living in the area, through legislative and constitutional measures to guarantee their rights. She said that UNMIK no longer had a function or a purpose and represented an unjustified spending of United Nations resources.

Most of the members of the Council noted the need to increase high-level dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, facilitated by the European Union, and to implement the agreements reached in Brussels in April 2013. They called upon both sides to set aside political ambitions in a spirit of restraint and responsibility, emphasizing that normalizing relations would be crucial for creating stability in the Balkans.

Some Council members said that UNMIK was overresourced and overstaffed and noted the need to downsize its structure, size and tasks. They also said that the Council should stop holding incendiary briefings marked by lengthy and unproductive statements, that increased efficiencies should be found within UNMIK and that the Secretariat should offer proposals for restructuring the Mission.

Others took a different view, emphasizing that there were no grounds for reducing the United Nations presence or the frequency of the Council's consideration of the issue.

Middle East

Iraq

On 2 February, the Council held a public meeting (see S/PV.7875) followed by consultations of the whole. The Council was briefed by the Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Ján Kubiš, who, in accordance with resolution 2299 (2016), presented the quarterly report for the period from October 2016 to January 2017. He indicated that Iraq would need continuous, substantial and sustainable support and assistance from the international community, including its regional partners, in the post-ISIL period. He expounded on the humanitarian

concept of operations adopted by the Government of Iraq and the Iraqi security forces that prioritized the protection of civilians. He also stressed that UNAMI had received no evidence of any systematic or widespread violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law on the part of the security forces. He underlined that, in addition to the protection of civilians, the avoidance of steps that could incite sectarian tensions and the prevention of revenge attacks in Mosul and other liberated areas of the country were of vital importance, and would contribute to the national reconciliation of Iraq and help to build a truly unified country. He deplored the continued terrorist attacks by ISIL, targeting civilians in many parts of the country. He urged the world not to forget the horrendous crimes committed by ISIL and underlined that the provision of justice to the victims of human rights abuses and violations required the re-establishment of the formal justice system, the effective and efficient documentation of violations and abuses, and the establishment of non-formal justice mechanisms, such as truth-telling, specialized care and rehabilitation programmes for women and de-radicalization programmes for children subjected to extremist indoctrination. He emphasized that there had been unprecedented coordination between the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government during the planning and conduct of the Mosul military operation. With regard to the question of missing Kuwaiti nationals and property, including the neighbouring country's national archives, he said that the Government of Iraq had demonstrated its determination to pursue the important work of locating missing persons.

Some Council members underlined that Iraq continued to face humanitarian, political, economic, security and other challenges and to struggle against terrorism. They also condemned the terrorism and violence against civilians and stressed the need for the Government of Iraq to continue the implementation of national reconciliation process and the restoration of important civilian infrastructure in the country.

The Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations, Mohamed Ali Alhakim, welcomed the successful liberation of Mosul's left bank and the progress made towards retaking the entire city, and informed the international community that more than 2,000 Iraqi families had been able to return home to Mosul's left bank. He called upon all States to implement the various Council resolutions relating to the movement and financing of foreign fighters and emphasized that the relevant sanctions committees must play their roles in neutralizing terrorist groups and cutting off their funding. In that regard, he welcomed the activities of UNAMI, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and the international coalition of States, especially the support provided by the United States of America and the European Union, as well as other States not part of the coalition. With regard to missing Kuwaiti citizens and property, he said that the joint commission charged with investigating the matter was currently conducting a number of interviews, reaching out to witnesses and using a number of other methods to collect valuable information. No human remains had yet been found, but excavations would continue in 2017. He underlined the importance of sincere good-neighbourly relations and thanked Kuwait for the support it had provided for the recently liberated areas of Iraq.

After the consultations of the whole, the President briefed the media on the discussion with agreed summary notes, as follows: members of the Council expressed their support for the work of the Government of Iraq and its security forces to liberate and secure eastern Mosul, and its efforts to protect civilians. All parties were called upon to take all feasible precautions with a view to avoiding and minimizing harm to civilians and civilian objects, in accordance with international humanitarian law. The members of the Council expressed their continuing concern

regarding the humanitarian situation across Iraq, in particular in and around Mosul, and praised the efforts of all parties there for their humanitarian assistance. They emphasized the urgent need to accelerate national reconciliation efforts, including with wider involvement of women and civil society in particular, and for all stakeholders to support the process. The Council welcomed the desire of Iraq to pursue good-neighbourly relations with all of its neighbours, strongly condemned the atrocities committed by ISIL and urged the Government of Iraq to thoroughly investigate any allegations of human rights violations and abuses, and violations of international humanitarian law, by all parties, and to bring perpetrators to justice. Enhanced accountability for serious crimes should be a priority for the country. The members of the Council reiterated the need to prevent the movement of ISIL fighters from Mosul to the neighbouring Syrian Arab Republic. In addition, the members of the Council recognized the paramount need of Iraq to rebuild critical infrastructure in the country, particularly in Mosul, and urged all Member States to consider the possibility of rendering their assistance in that matter.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

On 16 February, the Council held a public meeting (see S/PV.7885) followed by consultations of the whole. The Council was briefed by the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov, via videoconference from Jerusalem. He indicated that the two-State solution remains the only way to achieve the legitimate national aspirations of both peoples, urging Israel to stop constructing and expanding settlements in order to preserve that prospect, and calling upon the Palestinian leadership to tackle the challenges of violence and incitement on their side. Although the leaders of both sides agreed on the need to continue security cooperation, the Special Coordinator noted that there was increasing anger on the streets and that radical views were hijacking the discourse, as moderate voices were increasingly vilified and cast aside. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict must never be allowed to drift into the abyss of the extremism and radicalism sweeping across the region. Both parties, as well as the international community, had a duty to act responsibly, avoid escalating tensions, refrain from unilateral actions, and work together to uphold peace. He stressed that the Middle East continued to be plagued by extremism, bloodshed and displacement, which spread intolerance, violence and religious radicalism far beyond the region. The Special Coordinator called upon both sides to contemplate carefully the future they envisioned for their peoples. The period under review had also seen Government statements announcing significant settlement expansion, which, he said, had been quickly followed by action. Within three weeks, Israeli authorities had promoted some 4,000 housing units in Area C. He said that the settlement activities were illegal under international law, and underlined that they constituted one of the main obstacles to peace. Also of concern was the trend of Israel demolishing Palestinian-owned structures. He noted that 2016 had seen more than 1,000 demolitions, nearly double the figure for the previous year and the largest annual number on record, and urged Israel to cease that destructive practice. He said that recent unilateral actions were pushing the parties on to a high-stakes collision course, and noted that the Parliament of Israel had adopted the so-called regularization law during the reporting period, which would allow the use of privately owned Palestinian land in the occupied West Bank for the construction of Israeli settlements without the owners' consent. He said that the new law also had the potential to retroactively "regularize" thousands of existing settlement units built on lands owned by Palestinians living under occupation, and warned that keeping the law in place would have far-reaching consequences for Israel, while seriously undermining the prospects for the two-State solution and Arab-Israeli peace. While welcoming the Palestinian decision to hold the postponed local elections, he noted with regret that

Hamas had rejected that decision. Urging all factions to work together in good faith to uphold democracy and overcome internal divisions, he said that elections conducted in accordance with international standards could help to advance reconciliation. Concerning the Gaza Strip, he cautioned that the situation there was not sustainable unless the pressing needs of its people were addressed more systematically, and that another escalation was likely. Challenges related to the crippling closures imposed on Gaza and the persisting political divide continued to exacerbate the volatile situation in the enclave. He deplored the continued terrorist attacks against Israel and specifically condemned the launch of a series of rockets towards the Israeli coastal resort of Eilat on the night of 8 February committed by ISIL and its affiliates in the Sinai. He unequivocally condemned that act, as well as those who inspired, implemented and celebrated it. The Special Coordinator reaffirmed his concern about the daily violence and the so-called "lone wolf" attacks against Israeli civilians, particularly the attack on 9 February in the market of Petah Tikva in central Israel. At the same time, he called for the calibrated use of force and stressed that live fire should be used only as a last resort, in situations of imminent threat of death or serious injury, with any resulting death or injury properly investigated by the authorities. Turning to the situation in Lebanon, the Special Coordinator emphasized the continuing reactivation of State institutions, adding that the President, Michel Aoun, and the Prime Minister, Saad Hariri, had expressed confidence that an electoral law would be agreed with the aim of holding timely elections. Furthermore, he noted that relative calm continued in the areas of operation of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and along the Blue Line, with the exception of some ground and air violations. He concluded by saying that, in the operational areas of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force, the ceasefire between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic was holding, albeit in a volatile security environment on the Bravo side.

During the briefing, one delegation emphasized that General Assembly resolution 181 (II), by which Palestine was partitioned to create an Arab State and a Jewish State, should remain the focus of the Council. Reaffirming his delegation's support for the two-State solution, the representative urged the parties to resume direct bilateral negotiations as soon as possible and without preconditions. He underscored the need for third countries to demonstrate moderation and avoid statements that could compromise the prospects for peace. He also deplored the fact that the Council had not expressed a position regarding the attack in Petah Tikva in central Israel on 9 February.

Another representative described the law of Israel on the regularization of settlements as an act of provocation to the international community and a blatant violation of resolution 2334 (2016). He warned that the decisions and actions of Israel with regard to settlements would be detrimental to any international initiative for seeking peace and undermine the prospects of realizing the two-State solution, and urged all Security Council members to shoulder their responsibilities under the Charter and ensure effective compliance with the organ's resolutions.

Syrian Arab Republic

On 22 February, the Council held a public meeting (see S/PV.7888) followed by consultations of the whole. The Council was briefed by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator on the humanitarian situation in the Syrian Arab Republic. He indicated that a genuine political commitment to peace in the Syrian Arab Republic would be needed if the year 2017 was to offer any prospect other than the death and destruction of the past six years. He said that millions of battered and beleaguered women, men and children depended on meaningful action and constructive engagement by the Syrian

parties and their allies, and that the inter-Syrian negotiations to be started on 23 February signalled that the start of a process to end the conflict might finally be within reach. He deplored the fact that most of the population, some 13.5 million people, were in need of protection and humanitarian assistance, nearly 85 per cent of Syrians lived in poverty and 12.8 million required health assistance. Children had been killed, subjected to physical and psychological trauma and forced into early marriages. With the war entering its sixth year, 5.82 million children and young people were in need of education assistance inside the Syrian Arab Republic. He voiced strong concern about attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, including bombardments and air strikes in Idlib and Dar'a, and besieged locations in the eastern Ghutah area, most notably in Duma, Harasta, Zamalka and Jawbar, as well as Irbin. He described the humanitarian situation in Zabadani, Fu'ah, Kafraya and Madaya as catastrophic. Although the United Nations and its partners had reached millions of Syrians through regular and cross-border programming each month, he said that the lack of safe and unimpeded access was the greatest obstacle to delivering aid to besieged areas. He noted that, despite considerable improvement, with 3.3 million people reached in 2016, humanitarian actors were too seldom able to deliver life-saving assistance and protection services on a sustained basis. In December 2016, only one convoy had been deployed, reaching 6,000 people, despite initial approvals to reach almost 800,000 people. He urged Member States with influence to ensure that a "zero implementation rate" did not occur again in the coming weeks. In this regard, he stressed that the United Nations and its partners were ready and able to deliver assistance to 300,000 people in besieged and hard-to-reach areas per week.

One representative expressed the hope that 2017 would be the last year of conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic. He said that the ceasefire agreed at the end of 2016 had led to a sharp drop in violence, allowed the delivery of humanitarian relief, and created an environment conducive to the resumption of negotiations in Astana. He underlined that his country hoped that the parties would overcome their mutual distrust and move forward with the political transition process. He emphasized that, despite those gains, however, the situation of civilians remained alarming and intolerable. He noted the urgent need to overcome obstacles to aid delivery, describing the removal of medical kits from convoys, a crime against humanity that was again being reported, as particularly abhorrent.

After the consultations of the whole, the President briefed the media on the discussion with agreed summary notes, as follows: the Council members encouraged the strengthening of the ceasefire throughout the country and voiced concern over the lack of progress in guaranteeing sustainable and unhindered humanitarian access. In particular, they deplored the continuing besiegement of more than 600,000 people in 13 different locations in the Syrian Arab Republic and reiterated their grave concern at the continuing impediments to the delivery of humanitarian assistance across conflict lines. Furthermore, Member States emphasized that the humanitarian situation would continue to deteriorate further in the absence of a political solution to the crisis and expressed the hope that the intra-Syrian talks in Geneva would produce tangible results and represent a formidable step towards a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political transition.

On 28 February, at a public meeting (see S/PV.7893), the Council held a vote on a draft resolution on accountability for chemical weapons use in the Syrian Arab Republic, annexed to which was a list designating 21 Syrian individuals, companies and organizations that would have been subjected to the proposed measures.

Following a vote of 9 in favour to 3 against (Bolivia (Plurinational State of), China, Russian Federation), with 3 abstentions (Egypt, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan), the

draft resolution was not adopted owing to the negative vote of two permanent members of the Council.

Speaking before the vote as two of three main sponsors, the permanent representatives of France and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland underlined the urgency of responding to the confirmed cases of chemical weapons use and called upon the Council to support the draft resolution.

After the voting, the representative of the United Kingdom said that the vetoes cast by the Russian Federation and China were at complete odds with the principles of non-proliferation that they claimed to support. The action marked the seventh veto by the Russian Federation on the Syrian Arab Republic in five years. The representative of the United States said that the Russian Federation and China had made an outrageous and indefensible choice in not holding the President of the Syrian Arab Republic, Bashar al-Assad, responsible for the use of chemical weapons. The delegations of Italy, Japan, Senegal, Sweden, Uruguay and Ukraine, emphasizing that nothing could justify the use of chemical weapons, also expressed their deep disappointment with the voting results.

The representative of the Russian Federation, responding to those comments, pointed out that his delegation had expressed serious concerns about the recent third and fourth reports of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism. He added that the draft had been put to the vote in an effort to undermine the political talks currently under way in Astana. The representative of China said that the ceasefire in the Syrian Arab Republic had been maintained and a new round of peace talks was under way, which created a rare opportunity to resolve the conflict.

The representative of Ethiopia, explaining his abstention, also condemned the use of chemical weapons for any reason under any circumstance. He emphasized that, in the Syrian Arab Republic, however, the Joint Investigative Mechanism had not been able to find "highly convincing", "substantial" or even "sufficient" evidence, but only "sufficient information". The representative of Egypt said that ensuring accountability in the Syrian Arab Republic or elsewhere required the assessment of evidence. Expressing surprise that the usual steps had been bypassed, he noted that the list annexed to the draft contained the names of those who would be subjected to sanctions, but that the Mechanism had not made accusations against them. Egypt outlined its position on the text's imbalance, especially the lack of evidence, and voiced surprise at the insistence on proceeding with a vote without having made modifications to address those imbalances. The representative of Kazakhstan said that the vote demonstrated the Council's inability to reach unanimity on the issue of accountability for the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. Given the absence of consensus, the delegation had abstained.

The representative of the Syrian Arab Republic said that the "triangle", composed of France, the United Kingdom and the United States, continued to pursue its politicized and dangerous approach to the situation in his country.

Yemen

On 23 February, at a public meeting (see S/PV.7889), the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2342 (2017), by which it renewed the measures imposed by paragraphs 11 and 15 of resolution 2140 (2014) until 26 February 2018. The Council also renewed for one year a targeted arms embargo, travel ban and asset freeze against individuals and entities designated by the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014) and reaffirmed the provisions of paragraphs 14 to 17 of resolution 2216 (2015), through which it had decided to prohibit the supply,

sale or transfer of arms to individuals and entities designated by the Committee as engaging in or providing support for acts that threatened the peace, security or stability of Yemen. The Council also extended until 28 March 2018 the mandate of the five-member Panel of Experts on Yemen. It requested that the Panel provide a midterm update to the Committee no later than 28 July 2017 and a final report to the Security Council no later than 28 January 2018.

Asia

United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia

On 2 February, the Council held consultations of the whole. After the consultations, the President briefed the media on the discussion with agreed summary notes, as follows: the members of the Security Council welcomed the briefing by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, Petko Draganov, on the work of the Centre over the past seven months. They reaffirmed the importance of conflict prevention tools in the maintenance of international peace and security, including through early-warning mechanisms and engaging in preventive diplomacy, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. They acknowledged the role of the Centre in assisting the Central Asian States in addressing regional challenges, including in regional counter-terrorism activities, addressing the problem of illicit drug production, trade and trafficking and transboundary water management. The members of the Council encouraged increased cooperation and coordination between the Central Asian States, the Centre and relevant regional organizations, to strengthen the region's capacity to overcome challenges to peace, stability and sustainable development.

Democratic People's Republic of Korea

On 13 February, the Council held consultations of the whole. The Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Miroslav Jenča, briefed the Council on the ballistic missile launch conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on 11 February. After the consultations, the President briefed the media on the discussion with agreed summary notes, as follows: the Council members were unanimous in condemning the ballistic missile launch. The delegations remained concerned over continued violations by Pyongyang of Council resolutions 1718 (2006), 1874 (2009), 2087 (2013), 2094 (2013), 2270 (2016) and 2321 (2016). The Council agreed to continue to closely monitor the situation and take further significant measures, in line with the Council's previously expressed determination, to achieve the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. On the eve of the consultations, the Council approved a statement to the press, in which it, inter alia, emphasized the importance of the full compliance by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea with the relevant Council resolutions and directed the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1718 (2006) to intensify its work to strengthen the enforcement of resolutions 2270 (2016) and 2321 (2016).

On 27 February, the Council held consultations of the whole. The Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1718 (2006) briefed the Council on the Committee's activities during the period from 1 December 2016 to 28 February 2017, in accordance with paragraph 12 (g) of resolution 1718 (2006). After the consultations, the President briefed the media on the discussion with agreed summary notes, as follows: the Chair informed the Council that, during the reporting period, the Committee had held one informal meeting to jointly assess the findings and recommendations contained in the final report of the Panel of Experts, submitted to the Council several reports regarding implementation aspects of

resolutions 2270 (2016) and 2321 (2016), convened an open briefing for the general membership of the United Nations, and agreed on its annual report for 2016. The Chair expressed concern at the low number of national implementation reports pursuant to paragraph 36 of resolution 2321 (2016). The members of the Council welcomed the 90-day report of the Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1718 (2006). During the consultations, the members of the Council were unanimous in condemning the irresponsible and provocative attempts of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to evade the sanctions and emphasized the importance of full compliance with the relevant Council resolutions. The members of the Council agreed to continue to closely monitor the situation and work to achieve the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

Africa

Peace and security in Africa

On 3 February, the Council held consultations of the whole. After the consultations, the President briefed the media on the discussion with agreed summary notes, as follows: the members of the Council were briefed by the Secretary-General and discussed with him the outcome of his attendance at the African Union summit and his interactions with leaders of African countries on a wide range of issues, including strengthening the United Nations-African Union partnership and United Nations peacekeeping operations in Africa. The members of the Council welcomed the initiative of the Secretary-General to brief the Council on his trip and expressed their full support for such an approach, whereby they received first-hand information. They also stressed the need to ensure African ownership and full engagement of the continent in addressing outstanding issues and challenges faced by the African countries, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Council members expressed their hope that such briefings would become a standing practice, especially after the trips of the Secretary-General to different regions of the world.

Sudan

On 8 February, at a public meeting (see S/PV.7878), the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2340 (2017), by which it renewed the mandate of the Panel of Experts on the Sudan until 12 March 2018. In the resolution, the Council expressed its intention to take appropriate action with regard to the further extension of the mandate of the Panel of Experts by 12 February 2018. It further requested that the Panel of Experts provide to the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1591 (2005) a first report on its activities no later than 12 August 2017 and, after discussion with the Committee, a final report to the Council no later than 12 January 2018, with its findings and recommendations.

Libya

On 8 February, the Council held a public meeting (see S/PV.7879) followed by consultations of the whole. The Council received a briefing from the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Libya and Head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), Martin Kobler. The meeting was focused on the efforts under way to reach an inclusive and sustainable political settlement in Libya. During his briefing, the Special Representative stated that, despite some important advances in Libya, not nearly enough progress had been made in implementing the Libyan Political Agreement forged in 2016. He stressed that terrorism remained a threat, living conditions were poor and armed groups continued to abuse human rights with impunity. According to the Special

Representative, among the positive developments in Libya were the joint efforts by the Presidency Council and Libyan economic institutions to disburse the 37.5 billion Libyan dinar budget for 2017 so that State institutions could deliver basic services. He noted, however, that Libyans were not in a position to address the root causes of their divisions, stressing that "2017 must be a year of decisions and political breakthrough" and of national reconciliation to "heal the wounds of years of conflict and oppression".

Following the consultations of the whole, the Council members agreed on elements for the press, in which they reiterated their support for the work of UNSMIL and for the Libyan Political Agreement. They condemned all violence among armed groups in Libya. The members of the Council noted the ongoing challenges facing the Libyan people but welcomed recent progress, particularly in relation to the economic challenges facing Libya, and stressed the need for unity in the fight against terrorism. They reiterated their grave concern at the smuggling of migrants in the Mediterranean Sea, in particular off the coast of Libya, and called upon all parties to improve humanitarian access across Libya. The members of the Council recognized a growing concern among Libyans for a more inclusive political settlement within the framework of the Libyan Political Agreement. They welcomed the role of regional and international support, including countries neighbouring Libya and regional organizations, in convening Libyan-owned political talks to achieve such a settlement.

Côte d'Ivoire

On 8 February, the Council held a public meeting (see S/PV.7880) followed by consultations of the whole. The Council was briefed by the Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), Aïchatou Mindaoudou, who, in accordance with resolution 2284 (2016), presented the final progress report of the Secretary-General on UNOCI (S/2017/89). She emphasized that UNOCI would complete its drawdown and leave Côte d'Ivoire as it was mandated to by the Council in resolution 2284 (2016). By mid-February, most of the mission's uniformed personnel would leave and, by the end of April, only 159 personnel would remain as priority functions were transferred to the Government and the United Nations country team. She appealed to the Government of Côte d'Ivoire to support the implementation of the transition plan by financing efforts to advance national reconciliation and transitional justice, fully reform the security sector, reintegrate former combatants and improve the socioeconomic and cultural rights of Ivorians. She commended the national police, gendarmerie and armed forces for their efforts in safeguarding the referendum of 30 October 2016 and the legislative elections of 18 December 2016. The Government of Côte d'Ivoire was working on organizing a professional army and was addressing grievances over pay, promotions and poor living standards that had led to a mutiny by some members of the armed forces in January. She underlined that recent mutinies clearly reflected the need for the Government to reform the security sector. While national reconciliation still lagged behind reconstruction and economic recovery, the public release of the report of the Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation Commission, as recommended by the Council in resolution 2226 (2015), was a step forward. She said that the security situation in the country had remained stable during the reporting period and that reports of human rights violations were declining. Despite concerns over the slow prosecution of alleged perpetrators of sexual and gender-based violence and delays in providing support for victims, the National Human Rights Commission of Côte d'Ivoire was poised to take over the monitoring and implementation of a joint Ivorian armed forces-UNOCI mechanism to address allegations of human rights abuses by soldiers.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire, Marcel Amon-Tanoh, said that his country's return to peace and development was now irreversible. Côte d'Ivoire had adopted a new Constitution that had helped to strengthen national cohesion and provided the country with solid democratic institutions. He emphasized that the army and security forces had been professionalized through the appointment of new leaders at all levels and that the President of the country was working to resolve challenges every day. He also underlined that the economy had grown by 9 per cent annually in the past five years and that the Government was now focused on redistributing the fruits of that economic boom to all citizens, particularly the poorest. Concerning the closure of UNOCI, he stated that it would present an opportunity for Côte d'Ivoire to work with international and regional actors to combat terrorism in West Africa and beyond. He reiterated his country's desire to take a more active role in United Nations peacekeeping missions and called upon the Council to support its candidacy for a non-permanent seat for 2018-2019. He underlined that UNOCI would be remembered as a tremendous success story that had left behind the strongest francophone economy in West Africa.

After the consultations, the President briefed the media on the discussion with agreed summary notes, as follows: the members of the Council welcomed the continued progress of Côte d'Ivoire towards achieving lasting peace and stability and commended Côte d'Ivoire for the peaceful holding of the constitutional referendum and the legislative elections in 2016. The Council welcomed the work undertaken by the Government of Côte d'Ivoire, with the support of the international community, to address the remaining issues and challenges facing the country, including with regard to the management of its security forces and the reintegration of former combatants, as well as social cohesion, national reconciliation and human rights. The members of the Council underlined the need for the authorities of Côte d'Ivoire to continue and intensify those efforts, in particular in the field of security sector reform. The members of the Council welcomed the implementation of the transition plan and the ongoing drawdown of UNOCI and underscored the need for the international community to continue its support to Côte d'Ivoire after the closing of UNOCI.

Somalia

On 10 February, at a public meeting (see S/PV.7881), the Council adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2017/3), in which it welcomed the conclusion of the electoral process in Somalia and the election of the President, Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed Farmajo. The Council commended the role of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia in enabling the electoral process in close cooperation with the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and payed tribute to the contribution of the African Union Mission in Somalia to lasting peace and stability in Somalia.

Guinea-Bissau

On 14 February, the Council held a public meeting (see S/PV.7883) followed by consultations of the whole. The Council received a briefing from the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Guinea-Bissau and Head of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS), Modibo Ibrahim Touré. The Special Representative told the Council that it was critical for national actors to implement the provisions of the Conakry Agreement on the Implementation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Roadmap for the Resolution of the Political Crisis in Guinea-Bissau adopted by political leaders on 10 September 2016 in Bissau. He stressed that the implementation of the Agreement and the ECOWAS road map had been

challenging. He urged the authorities of Guinea-Bissau to focus on revising the electoral law and the laws governing political parties, as envisaged in the Conakry Agreement, in preparation for the legislative elections to be held in 2018. He also underlined the importance of critical reforms in the judicial, human rights, security and economic sectors. The Special Representative noted that, in the absence of a fully functioning Government, the United Nations and international financial institutions must continue to coordinate efforts to mitigate risks and reduce socioeconomic vulnerabilities. He informed the Council that UNIOGBIS was working to take forward a partnership initiative with the World Bank and other interested bilateral and multilateral partners to effectively strengthen local resilience and promote peace in Guinea-Bissau, in line with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

One representative expressed serious concern over the political impasse in Guinea-Bissau and urged national stakeholders to implement the Conakry Agreement. He noted that the work of UNIOGBIS remained of great value for the maintenance of law and order in Guinea-Bissau and supported the recommendation of the Secretary-General to extend the mandate of the mission for another period of one year.

After the consultations of the whole, the President briefed the media on the discussion with agreed summary notes, as follows: the members of the Council expressed their serious concern over the political impasse in Guinea-Bissau and urged national stakeholders to implement the Conakry Agreement. The members of the Council stressed the urgent need to ensure an inclusive dialogue among key national actors to ensure the effective functioning of the Government and welcomed the continued non-interference of security forces. They called upon all sides to refrain from inflammatory rhetoric and to take appropriate measures to de-escalate the situation. The members of the Council called upon all parties to cooperate to ensure the proper functioning of the National Assembly to pass key reforms. The members of the Council called upon the national authorities to expedite the review of the Constitution of Guinea-Bissau. The members of the Council commended the engagement of ECOWAS, particularly the ECOWAS Mission in Guinea-Bissau (ECOMIB), in enhancing stability in Guinea-Bissau. They encouraged ECOWAS to maintain the ECOMIB presence beyond June 2017 and international partners to consider extending their support in this regard. The members of the Council welcomed the initiative to send an ECOWAS mediation mission to Bissau. They urged donors to engage and support an inclusive national dialogue and stressed the need for a functioning Government in Guinea-Bissau to work to restore the confidence of development partners by resolving the political impasse. The members of the Council expressed concern over the challenges posed by transnational organized crime and other emerging threats, including drug trafficking, in the country. They expressed their support to the Special Representative, and requested him to continue working closely with all stakeholders for the resolution of the political crisis in Guinea-Bissau. They also voiced their support for the recommendation of the Secretary-General to extend the mandate of UNIOGBIS for another year.

On 22 February, the President of the Council informed members under "Any other business" about his meetings with the Political and Diplomatic Adviser and Special Envoy of the Prime Minister of Guinea-Bissau, Soares Sambu, on 15 February, and with the President of the Parliament of Guinea-Bissau, Cipriano Cassamá, on 16 February.

On 23 February, at a public meeting (see S/PV.7890), the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2343 (2017), by which it renewed the mandate of UNIOGBIS for a period of 12 months.

Central African Republic

On 15 February, the Council held a public meeting (see S/PV.7884) followed by consultations of the whole. The Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Hervé Ladsous, briefed the Council on the latest report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic and the activity of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). The Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations described, inter alia, the security situation across the country, in particular clashes over the strategically important town of Bambari, as well as how the Mission was adjusting its capabilities to the evolving situation on the ground and enhancing mobility and flexibility. The Chair of the Central African Republic configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, Omar Hilale (Morocco), also spoke, in particular, on the engagement of the Peacebuilding Commission to assist the authorities of the Central African Republic in the implementation of the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan and the Mutual Engagement Framework. The Permanent Representative of Ukraine, Volodymyr Yelchenko, addressed the Council, in his capacity as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013), to update the Council on the Committee's activities since the previous briefing on 8 July 2016 and on the work of the Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic. In addition to documenting the actions of rebel groups, the Panel noted that targeted sanctions against individuals and entities listed by the Committee had been poorly implemented. The Panel also highlighted the continued prevalence of arms smuggling, noting that weapons continued to pour into the country from the neighbouring States to the west, south and north-east.

After the consultations, the President briefed the media on the discussion with agreed summary notes, as follows: the Council members took note of the fragility of the security situation in the Central African Republic due to the ongoing activities of armed groups, and of the dire humanitarian situation in the country. They condemned the ongoing clashes between rival armed groups, notably in the centre and the north of the Central African Republic, and expressed concern at the impact of those clashes on civilian populations and the destabilizing effect on the country. They urged the armed groups to immediately halt the fighting and join the peace and reconciliation dialogue, initiated by the President of the Central African Republic, Faustin Archange Touadera, and welcomed the efforts of the African Union in this regard. They reiterated their call upon the authorities of the Central African Republic to implement a genuine and inclusive reconciliation and reform programme in the country in order to address the root causes of the conflict. They reiterated their full support to MINUSCA in the fulfilment of its strategic objective of the sustainable reduction of the presence of and threat posed by armed groups, and in the implementation of its comprehensive mandate in this regard. They took note of the new action plan carried out by MINUSCA regarding sexual exploitation and abuse. They recalled the renewal, by unanimity, of the sanctions regime for the Central African Republic in January and called upon all Member States, in particular neighbouring and regional States, to fully implement the provisions of resolution 2339 (2017) and to cooperate fully with the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013). They expressed support for the contribution of the Central African Republic configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission to sustainable peace in the country. The Council members welcomed the pledges announced at the Brussels Conference for the Central African Republic held in November 2016 and at the African Union Solidarity Conference for the Central African Republic held in Addis Ababa in February 2017, and encouraged Member States to complete swiftly the disbursement of those pledges.

Western Sahara

On 22 February, under "Any other business" the Council received a briefing by the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations on the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara.

South Sudan

On 10 February, the Council issued a statement to the press, in which it strongly condemned the continued fighting across South Sudan, particularly the incidents in the Equatoria and Upper Nile regions, and called upon all parties to cease hostilities immediately. The Council members also condemned in the strongest terms all attacks directed against civilians and expressed serious concern that, once again, there were reports of the killing of civilians, sexual and gender-based violence, the destruction of homes, ethnic violence and the looting of livestock and property. The Council members urged the Transitional Government of National Unity to take measures to ensure that those responsible for the attacks were held accountable. They expressed deep alarm that more than 84,000 individuals had fled South Sudan since the beginning of January and that many continued to be displaced internally. The Council members reiterated that targeting civilians may constitute war crimes and that those involved could be subject to sanctions, as authorized under resolution 2206 (2015) for actions that threaten the peace, security or stability of South Sudan.

On 23 February, the Council held consultations of the whole. The Council members expressed deep alarm that famine had been declared in parts of South Sudan and concern that 40 per cent of the population faced food insecurity. They agreed that this was a direct consequence of the conflict and the obstruction of humanitarian access. They agreed that the humanitarian crisis would not be resolved without resolution of the political crisis on the basis of the full implementation of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan of 2015. The members of the Council condemned the fighting, in particular in the Upper Nile and Equatoria regions and called upon all parties to cease hostilities and allow immediate humanitarian access to populations in need. They were deeply concerned about the human rights violations and abuses and violations of international humanitarian law, and urged the Government to hold perpetrators accountable and to fully implement chapter V of the peace agreement. The members of the Council were united in condemning obstructions to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan and the harassment of United Nations personnel, and called for immediate compliance with the status-of-forces agreement with the United Nations. They were concerned over various delays, for different reasons, in the deployment of the regional protection force and reiterated their call upon the Government to work constructively with the United Nations on the deployment of the force. The members of the Council recalled the joint press statement by the African Union, IGAD and the United Nations of 29 January 2017. They underlined an important positive role that regional actors, in particular the African Union and IGAD through the efforts of the African Union High Representative for South Sudan, Alpha Oumar Konaré, and the Chair of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, Festus Mogae, as well as the United Nations and civil society, including the church, could play in advancing peace in South Sudan.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

On 23 February, the Council held consultations of the whole. Under "Any other business", the Council considered the situation in the Democratic Republic of

the Congo resulting from the sudden decrease in security and the rise in inter-ethnic violence in the central part of the country.

On 24 February, the Council issued a statement to the press, in which it strongly condemned the violence witnessed in the Kasai region over recent months. It expressed grave concern at the recent reports of serious violations of international humanitarian law committed by local militia in that region, including the unlawful recruitment and use of child soldiers, and of killings of civilians by members of the security forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, all of which may constitute war crimes under international law.

Thematic issues

Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts

On 7 February, the Council held a public meeting (see S/PV.7877), followed by consultations of the whole. The Council heard a briefing by the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, who, in accordance with resolution 2253 (2015), presented the fourth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da'esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat. The report focused on Europe, as well as North and West Africa. In his briefing, the Under-Secretary-General emphasized that the fight against ISIL remained a priority for the international community. He warned that ISIL had expanded its attack area to countries neighbouring Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, while continuing to encourage its followers further afield to perpetrate attacks. Foreign terrorist fighters leaving those two countries were also augmenting the threat in their respective homelands. While ISIL income and the territory under its control seemed to be shrinking, the group retained sufficient funds to continue fighting. It relied heavily on income from extortion and the exploitation of hydrocarbons, even though resources from the latter were declining. Therefore, there were concerns that ISIL would try to expand other sources of income, such as kidnapping for ransom, and increase its reliance on donations by further propagating its messages. The Under-Secretary-General pointed out that ISIL had enabled such actions by providing guidance, assistance and inspiration through propaganda. It had also reinforced its presence in West Africa and the Maghreb, and its affiliate Boko Haram was attempting to spread its influence by committing terrorist attacks beyond Nigeria with the several thousand fighters at its disposal. He outlined actions by Member States in Europe, the Maghreb and West Africa to counter ISIL, including, inter alia, improvement of information-sharing and cooperation in addressing terrorist attacks and curtailing flows of foreign terrorist fighters as well as countering terrorism financing. United Nations actions to counter the ISIL threat included providing capacity-building assistance to Member States, assisting with border security, improving methods for addressing kidnapping for ransom and strengthening law enforcement. He emphasized the need for ensuring effective international cooperation in addressing the growth of transnational terrorism, especially as ISIL continued to expand its area of attacks and as foreign terrorist fighters who left the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq could pose grave risks to their home countries, those to which they were travelling, or those through which they were transiting.

Following the briefing, some delegations delivered statements, highlighting their national positions on the subject. They encouraged, inter alia, international cooperation to deal with terrorism financing, recruitment methods, foreign terrorist fighter flows and migration controls, expressed concern about the situation of women and girls in areas under terrorists' control, and underlined in this regard the

importance of Council resolution 2331 (2016) concerning trafficking in persons, asking for further information on efforts by States to end this practice.

On 13 February, the Council held an open debate on the theme "Protection of critical infrastructure against terrorist attacks", under the item entitled "Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts" (see S/PV.7882).

The meeting was chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Pavlo Klimkin. Delegations from 49 Member States participated in the debate, together with representatives of the European Union, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Holy See. The open debate was a follow-up to the informal Arria-formula meeting of the Security Council of 21 November 2016, which attested to an urgent need to ensure a high level of protection of critical infrastructures, vital for national security, public safety and the economic development of all States.

At the beginning of the meeting, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2341 (2017), sponsored by 47 Member States. The resolution aimed at further enhancing the effectiveness of the overall effort to counter terrorist attacks against critical infrastructure, in particular in the framework of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. In it the Council encouraged all Member States to make concerted and coordinated efforts, including through international and regional cooperation, to raise awareness and expand knowledge of the challenges posed by terrorist attacks. In addition, the Council called upon all Member States to establish criminal responsibility for terrorist attacks aimed at critical infrastructure and to explore ways to exchange information and enhance international and regional cooperation in preventing, mitigating and responding to such incidents, as well as sharing good practices in managing the risk of terrorist attacks on critical infrastructure. The Council heard several briefings, as described below.

The Chef de Cabinet in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, said infrastructure networks and systems had become interlinked, and an attack on one sector could lead to disruptions and widespread chaos, in particular those targeting cross-border facilities and networks. She emphasized the necessity of taking the following steps: mapping vulnerabilities in critical infrastructure, at all levels and in all sectors; promoting cooperation on prevention and mitigation of the possible effects of terrorist attacks; and building the capacities of States in such areas as risk assessment, preparedness and emergency management. She reiterated the readiness of the United Nations to assist Member States in this regard, noting the work of the inter-agency Working Group on the Protection of Critical Infrastructure, including Vulnerable Targets, Internet and Tourism Security, established by the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force.

The Secretary-General of the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), Jürgen Stock, speaking via videoconference from Lyon, called for strengthening critical-site security through improved emergency preparedness standards and procedures. He specifically outlined the efforts of the INTERPOL vulnerable targets team to enhance the physical security of laboratories in West Africa hosting dangerous pathogens and protect them against terrorist attacks. INTERPOL also continued to urge member countries to protect their borders, enhance counter-terrorist mobility and interdict certain materials and tools before they could become the next weapon. He encouraged inter-agency and international collaboration as a force multiplier, noting the close work of INTERPOL with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to mitigate the illicit trafficking of radiological and nuclear materials. In addition, he called for the exchange of information, detection of urgent threats and best practices on identifying vulnerabilities.

The Deputy Director General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), Hamid Ali Rao, said that a recent attack on a chemical facility in the Iraqi city of Mosul vividly illustrated the threat all too well. He emphasized that the responsibility for protecting critical infrastructure must be shared equally by industry and government, noting that the chemical industry already understood the need to prevent misuse of chemicals and protect chemical plants. He said that OPCW had been expanding its cooperation efforts in such areas as risk assessment, capacity-building and the creation of a rapid-response team able to be deployed in the event of a chemical terrorism incident.

The Special Adviser on Maritime Security and Facilitation to the Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), Chris Trelawny, put the spotlight on inter-agency cooperation at seaports, while also emphasizing the importance of a well-coordinated, risk-based preventative strategy to counter threats as varied as cargo theft and potential terrorist access to vessels. He said that IMO had introduced a number of deterrence measures to enhance maritime security, which included the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea and the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code, as well as a range of guidance, self-assessment tools and training materials for the protection of ports, ships and offshore installations. He called for adoption of a multi-agency, "whole of Government" approach to security, including the protection of critical infrastructure, underlining the need to assess threat, risk and vulnerability and urging both contingency and resilience planning.

The Senior Adviser on Science and Non-Proliferation at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies and former Deputy Director General of IAEA, Olli Heinonen, emphasized the risk of nuclear terrorism, warning that physical installations as well as shipments could be targeted. He also referred to the recent reports on the ability of ISIL to attract people with nuclear skills and bring an "insider threat" to nuclear installations. He stressed the role of IAEA in providing the necessary platform for international cooperation in developing safety and security standards for prevention and cooperation in response to nuclear and radiological accidents and incidents.

During the subsequent debate, the majority of participating Member States emphasized the need for protection of critical infrastructure, in particular aviation and maritime transportation, the nuclear industry and the finance sector, and cross-border projects. They underlined the importance of developing integrated national and regional strategies for critical infrastructure protection aimed at promoting security and resilience through the introduction of protection, mitigation, response and recovery measures. Considering the transnational nature of most threats to critical infrastructure, they called for effective international, regional and subregional cooperation, the establishment of regular contacts between competent authorities of States, including on sharing relevant information, and the establishment of joint early warning networks. They also called for strengthening private-public partnerships in securing critical infrastructure, and outlined prospects for States exchanging good practices.

Some delegations pointed out the importance of applying a collaborative prevention approach to address the increasing number of terrorist cyberattacks against critical infrastructure as well as to create an open, resilient cyberspace in close cooperation with the private sector.

Some delegations emphasized the provision of technical assistance to countries to strengthen their capacity to resist terrorist threats. In this regard, they noted the role of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force.

During the month, the Council adopted a number of statements to the press on terrorist attacks: an attack against a United Nations monitoring team near the Nigeria-Cameroon border on 31 January 2017; an attack outside the Supreme Court in Kabul on 7 February 2017; an attack at a market in Mogadishu on 9 February 2017; and an attack in Baghdad on 16 February 2017.

Implementation of the note by the President of the Security Council (S/2010/507)

Consistent with the objective of the Ukraine presidency to uphold and further enhance the transparency, accountability and inclusiveness of the Council's work, a formal public wrap-up meeting was convened on 28 February (see S/PV.7892).

At the beginning of the meeting, the President drew the attention of the members of the Council to the letter from the President of the Council dated 9 February 2017 inviting Member States and Permanent Observers to communicate to the presidency, if they so wished, suggestions regarding issues concerning the work of the Security Council during the month of February to be proposed for consideration at the wrap-up meeting. The President noted that the contributions submitted by Member States came from different regions of the world, and that the suggested questions and proposals concerned both substantive items and the working methods of the Council. An informal list of all communications received had been brought to the attention of the members of the Council in advance of the meeting. The President expressed his conviction that such a practice could contribute to an enhanced interaction between the Council and the United Nations membership. Some Council members addressed the issues raised in their statements and welcomed the renewal of the practice of wrap-up meetings.

Taking stock of the Council's methods of work during the month, some members noted the efforts of the Presidency to make the Council's work more effective and transparent by using agreed press elements and summaries to inform Member States and the media of the discussions held during consultations of the whole. The practice of informal meetings of the President with representatives of Member States concerned and briefers before Council meetings was also considered useful.

A concern was expressed that despite the commitment to resort to open meetings there was a marked increase in the number of informal consultations of the Council. The President noted that while drafting the provisional programme of work for February he strived to plan most of the meetings in open chamber and thanked Council members for their understanding of such an approach. Some delegations also called on Council members to deliver their statements during public meetings rather than in consultations of the whole.

Members of the Council welcomed the briefing of the Secretary-General on his attendance at the African Union summit and his interaction with leaders of African countries on the wide range of issues on strengthening the United Nations-African Union partnership. Some members stressed that such briefings on a regular basis would immensely strengthen the relationship between the Council and the Secretary-General.

A delegation stated that it was crucial that the Secretariat distribute as much documentation as possible ahead of consultations of the Council, and that it was unacceptable to deny Council members' access to information that would be essential for determining positions and taking action.

The members of the Council highlighted the Council's unanimous support for resolutions 2340 (2017) concerning the situation in the Sudan, 2341 (2017) concerning the protection of critical infrastructure, 2342 (2017) concerning the

situation in Yemen, and 2343 (2017) concerning the situation in Guinea-Bissau, noting that they had all resulted from dialogue and negotiation.

The Council members emphasized the results of the open debates promoted by the President on the subjects "Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts: protection of critical infrastructure against terrorist attacks" and "Maintenance of international peace and security: conflicts in Europe".

Delegations commented on the emergency meeting held on 2 February on the situation in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine; some recalled the targeting of OSCE monitors and equipment by combined Russian and separatist forces, others emphasized the need for greater cooperation with OSCE. Some members also recalled the briefing of the Chairperson-in-Office of OSCE and supported the priorities of the Office outlined during the briefing.

It was also noted as significant that the Council had unanimously condemned the ballistic missile launch on 12 February by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Member States were urged to implement the relevant resolutions to make Pyongyang change its course of action, commit to denuclearization and return to dialogue.

Many speakers encouraged the Council to remain vigilant and for members to use their influence on parties to the conflict to ease all aspects of the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic, entering its sixth year.

Council members also noted that the Council in February had addressed several country situations in Africa. Some drew attention to the briefing on 8 February by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Côte d'Ivoire, who had confirmed that UNOCI would hand over responsibilities to the Ivorian authorities in accordance with the mission's drawdown. Other members highlighted efforts by the President of the Central African Republic to stabilize and reconcile the country, while a recent meeting on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo had featured comments about slow progress in implementing the political agreement of 31 December 2016.

Some members urged the Council to adopt the concept of sustaining peace in a practical and applied manner. They advocated a paradigm of a shift away from managing conflicts to addressing their root causes, in accordance with different contexts, while ensuring national reconciliation.

Addressing the questions brought to the attention of the Council members by Member States in response to the letter from the President, some Chairs of subsidiary organs and working groups referred to recent work and expected products of the subsidiary bodies of the Council.

Priorities of the Council presidency for the month of March were highlighted during the discussion.

The President expressed appreciation for the contribution of the members of the Council and their willingness to work constructively. The Council members congratulated Ukraine on a well-conducted Presidency.